

### *Substance Abuse*

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### *What is substance abuse?*

Substance abuse (often referred to as drug abuse) is a generic term for a condition in which an individual takes body and/or mind altering substances in an ongoing harmful and compulsive manner that eventually harms the body. It is generally recognized that substance abuse involves two aspects of addiction common to most types of drug dependence:

- ⌘ *Psychological dependence* - characterized by a feeling of satisfaction or euphoria and a desire to repeat the administration of the drug in order to produce pleasure or avoid pain, and
- ⌘ *Physical dependence* - is a condition of physical adaptation to a drug accompanied by a development of tolerance for it; withdrawal symptoms are common when the drug is withheld, characterized by intense physical disturbance and discomfort.<sup>57</sup>

### *Why is substance abuse a health issue for Detroiters?*

Substance abuse is a health concern in itself; it is related to a host of other conditions. For example, injecting drug use (IDU) is a significant risk category for HIV.<sup>††††</sup> Alcohol abuse leads to organ damage, particularly to the liver. Tobacco use, including loose tobacco, cigarettes, and cigars, is perhaps the most common form of substance abuse. It is addictive both psychologically and physically, due to the effects of nicotine, and is proven to be damaging to health. Tobacco use is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths in the United States.<sup>66</sup>

Without treatment, substance abuse is can become a chronic condition, and in sustained or severe cases can result in death. A survey of many of the nations largest cities ranks Detroit, fifth for deaths related to substance abuse.<sup>58</sup> Drug treatment data is a direct indicator of substance abuse, but does not reflect the actual level of substance abuse in the community, which is difficult to measure. Other less direct indicators include drug deaths, illness related to drug use, criminal activity involving illicit drugs, and funding directed toward prevention and treatment.<sup>59</sup> None of these measures, however, demonstrate the community level problems and negative life circumstances that are created for Detroit families when individuals are addicted.

### *Substance Abuse in Detroit*

For residents of the City of Detroit, there were 218 drug-induced deaths in 2000. Thirty-nine percent of those who died were female, though most of the deceased were male (61%). Eighty percent were Black, while 18.8% were White, and less than 1% were to Hispanic residents.<sup>60</sup> Of the 14,598 persons admitted for substance abuse treatment through the Detroit Health Department between October 1, 2000 and September 30, 2001, 55% successfully completed treatment. The leading substances for which clients have been treated include heroin, cocaine, alcohol, and marijuana. These substances will be further discussed in the remainder of the report as well as youth attitudes regarding substance abuse.

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<sup>††††</sup> Please see the HIV/AIDS *Profile* section for more information regarding the relationship between IDU and HIV.

## HEROIN

Heroin is the leading drug used by those who seek substance abuse treatment in the City of Detroit. Forty-five percent of the 14,598 individuals who were admitted for substance abuse treatment in FY2000/2001, were treated for heroin addiction.<sup>††††, 61</sup> Similarly, MDCH reports that heroin was the primary drug among treatment admissions for FY2000/2001 accounting for 34% of admissions throughout Wayne County and 14% of all Michigan treatment admissions. DAWN reports that ED mentions for heroin have also gradually increased in the metropolitan Detroit area since 1992. The rate of mentions for heroin in 1999 was 61.5 per 100,000 in contrast to 75.8 in 2000.

## COCAINE

Cocaine is the second leading drug used by those who seek substance abuse treatment in the City of Detroit. Twenty-four percent of the 14,598 individuals who were admitted for substance abuse treatment in FY2000/2001, were treated for cocaine addiction.<sup>62</sup> Cocaine, with crack predominating, also accounted for a higher proportion of treatment admissions in Wayne County than for the rest of Michigan. Though heroin admissions to treatment exceed those for cocaine in Detroit, cocaine, including crack, was the top illicit drug among Michigan admissions in FY2000/2001.<sup>63</sup> According to the MDCH, cocaine is the most mentioned drug for Emergency Department (ED) visits in the Detroit metropolitan area; the rate of cocaine mentions per 100,000 population was 179 cases in 2000.<sup>§§§§§</sup>

## ALCOHOL

Alcohol is third most common addiction for treatment in Detroit, comprising 18% of the 14,598 admissions for FY2000/2001. Most clients who seek substance abuse treatment through the Detroit Health Department specify a primary drug with no secondary drug choice. Of those who report a secondary drug, alcohol is most frequently identified, indicating alcohol use in combination with other substances.

## MARIJUANA

Six percent of Detroit substance abuse treatment admissions in FY2000/2001 were for marijuana. DAWN reports that ED mentions regarding marijuana have been steady throughout the 1990s in the Detroit metropolitan area, and have typically involved males aged 20-25 years of age. Among marijuana treatment admissions for Wayne County, MDCH reports that 26% were less than 21 years of age. For statewide admissions 36% were under 21 years old.

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<sup>††††</sup> For substance abuse the State of Michigan reports data per fiscal year (FY), not per calendar year. FY2000/2001 includes dates October 1, 2000 through September 30, 2001.

<sup>§§§§§</sup> The term ME drug mention (or ME mention) is used to refer to a substance or drug that is reported ("mentioned") in a drug abuse death submitted to DAWN. As many as 6 drugs, plus alcohol-in-combination, can be reported on each case. Thus, the number of ME drug mentions will always equal or exceed the number of ME episodes.

## YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY

Results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey point to the need for ongoing intense drug prevention in Detroit. Forty-four percent of the Detroit high school participants reported using marijuana one or more times during their lives. This was slightly below response to the same question by high school students throughout the state (46.4%), which included the students from Detroit. While 8.1% of the students in Michigan used any form of cocaine, 3.4% of the Detroit students confirmed cocaine use. Alarming, 32.6% of the Detroit and 33.7% of all Michigan participants had been "offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property by someone" during the 30 days prior to the survey.